

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

O. H. 45

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ERNIE DUMLEVIE

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

May 14, 1980

FOUR STAR BOND

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INTERVIEWEE: ERNIE DUNLEVIE

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

DATE: 14 May 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Ernie Dunlevie for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on May 14, 1980, at two-thirty in the afternoon at Bermuda Dunes Development Company in Bermuda Dunes on Adams.

Let's start talking about the classics and your involvement in it.

ED: Okay. We had just started Bermuda Dunes. In fact, we were opening the course and clubhouse in Bermuda Dunes on March 1, 1959. And during the months just before we opened, I guess, was the last Thunderbird Invitational Tournament, which was a pro-am and with a limited field. And as I recall during the last day, the Sunday of the Thunderbird Tournament, they announced that would be the

last year. And there were several fellows standing around bemoaning the fact that the tournament would no longer be in the desert. And among them were Milt Hicks, Ed Vines and I believe Johnny Dawson. And I was there, somewhat a novice in the field of golf and was listening to their conversation. And the idea developed by Milt of enlarging the Thunderbird, taking the dates, Thunderbird tournament dates, and enlarging the tournament and using four golf courses. And they asked me if we would participate with Bermuda Dunes. And I said yes. And so that was what really started what was then the Palm Springs Desert Classic. And the first tournament was held in February, I believe, of 1960. And the four courses involved were Thunderbird, Tamarisk, Indian Wells and Bermuda Dunes. The second year, or after the first year, Thunderbird dropped out and El Dorado joined the tournament. And several years later, then a fifth course was added, La Quinta, in about 1963, I believe, or 1964. And when La Quinta was added, El Dorado, and then Tamarisk dropped out for one year, I think, possibly two, and then Tamarisk came back in. Then they alternated each year with El Dorado. The other courses were in every year and Tamarisk and El Dorado alternated. In 1965,

or prior to the tournament of 1965, Bob Hope joined, and it then became the Bob Hope Desert Classic, which it has been ever since. And that pretty well brings it up to date. Of course, I think you're aware of the fact that all of the moneys goes to local charities. And the idea for the Eisenhower Medical Center actually was born in a classic meeting. And the original intent was to provide a medical facility in the Palm Desert-Indian Wells-Bermuda Dunes general area because the closest hospital then was either in Palm Springs or Indio. And another group was formed which included several of the members of the classic board, which was sort of an ad hoc committee that started the Eisenhower Medical Center. And, of course, when General Eisenhower became associated with it, then the idea really took hold. And instead of a small emergency facility, it's blossomed into one of the finest hospitals in the United States. The tournament to date has contributed over seven million dollars to local charities. And, of course, every year we anticipate another tidy sum. And I think that pretty well brings you up to date unless you have some questions.

PY: Yes. Could you elaborate a little on the Thunderbird Classic proceeding with

ED: Well, it was called the Thunderbird Invitational, and it was a much smaller tournament, of course, than the classic. They just used the one course and it was put on by Thunderbird Country Club. And they invited a series of golf professionals, and then amateurs played with them in a pro-am tournament. And I think there was a one-day pro-am, and then a four-day pro tournament, the standard seventy-two hole format. But it was a small tournament. I think the prize, and you must remember this was back in the late fifties, the total purse was twenty-five thousand dollars, I think, which meant that the winner probably got two or three thousand dollars. When the Bob Hope Classic, or the Palm Springs Desert Classic, came into being, the first year our purse was a hundred thousand dollars. And I think with one exception, there was a tournament in the east that disbanded shortly after we did, but with that exception we were the first hundred thousand dollar tournament. And the first and only tournament to have a five-day ninety-hole format, which we still maintain. It's still the longest and I guess biggest tournament in the world in terms of number of holes played and number of contestants.

PY: Where did that idea come from?

ED: Well, I really don't remember. I think we wanted to use four courses. We wanted to get as many players as we could, as many amateurs as we could, in order to raise money for charity. And, of course, one of the major sources of income is the entry fee from amateurs. So as a result we enlarged the field and used four courses, which we play simultaneously for four days, and then the pros. Below seventy and ties play on one course the fifth day. And that's what makes up the ninety holes. The amateurs play only seventy-two holes. But most every tournaments are one-day pro-ams where they only play eighteen holes. So the amateurs like it because they get to play for four days and they get to play with four different pros, a different pro each day. So it's becoming really quite a good tournament. And we have every year a tremendous waiting list of people who want to play in it.

PY: How could you afford the *such a* hundred thousand after having offered twenty-five?

ED: Well, we really shouldn't have offered a hundred thousand, but we thought we were going to sell our television for a tidy sum, but we didn't the first year. As a matter

fact, the first year we had the tournament we lost money. But everybody was so enthusiastic about it that a few of us went down to the bank and borrowed enough money to pay off all of our bills. And then later, I think in November the same year, we borrowed a little more money which we gave to charity, which supposedly was the proceeds of the tournament. I don't think anybody other than our board knew we lost money on the tournament. And that got everybody kind of fired up and we continued the tournament. The next year we made enough money to pay our debts and have a little left over for charity. And then every year after that we've made money on the tournament. Up to the point now where we're kicking around between eight hundred and nine hundred thousand dollars for the last two or three years.

PY: You really got that going.

ED: Well, yes, it's worked out very well and I guess everybody who's associated with it and most of the people obviously are volunteers, all of the members of the clubs and their wives get involved. We probably use a thousand volunteers during the course of the tournament. All of the directors are volunteers from the various clubs. There's three from each club. And, of course, Bob Hope volunteers his

time and energy. And we do have a staff that works eight or nine months of the year consisting of an executive secretary and two girls. And then we augment that shortly before the tournament with probably three or four other paid people who, you know, help set up the courses and what have you. But other than that, everybody who works on it is a volunteer. Without the volunteers, if we had to pay all the volunteers, it would cost us probably the nine hundred thousand dollars because we've got bank executives and people like that standing out on the street corners selling tickets. Retired presidents of national companies and, you know, things of that type. But if we had to pay them what they're worth by the hour, we'd probably lose nine hundred thousand instead of making nine hundred thousand.

PY: It sounds as if it's become quite a, want to say community, it is a community effort, but within a given community and particularly the volunteers. Do you have them coming back?

ED: Oh, no. We have volunteers for, who have worked on the tournament for years. In fact, one fellow just retired right after the nineteen, let's see, this is eighty, right after the seventy-nine tournament, I believe it was, and

he'd worked on every tournament from the very beginning, 1960, the old Palm Springs Desert Classic, nineteen years. And so we gave him a lifetime badge or ticket to the tournament. He came back, he moved to Arizona, and I think he came back this year to see the tournament. We have people who come back from any number of places just to work on the tournament every year. And in fact we changed the dates of the tournament from early February to early January for the 1979 and 1980 tournaments. And we were a little bit concerned because a lot of people are not here that early in the year, but we, about the volunteers and, as I say, they came, as soon as they found out when the tournament was, they changed their plans and they came out early to work on the tournament. The same people every year.

PY: What's the draw?

ED: Well, they get a great deal of satisfaction, I think, out of helping raise money for charity. I think that's the principle thing, plus the fact that it's exciting. And they enjoy it. They feel like they're a part of a community effort that's doing some good. And a lot of them, for example, the fellows that stand on the street and sell tickets, they never see any golf. They don't

even see the golf courses, you know, but they still come and they still enjoy working on the tournament. Then the gals drive cars, courtesy cars, from one course to another taking the golfers back and forth. And we have men who do the marshaling, club members who walk around the course, you know, and hold up the "quiet please" titles and keep the crowd back and that sort of thing. They're all volunteers. All of the people that, they help with the television, they do all kinds of things. Some jobs are kind of glamorous and fun, and some of them are to the point of drudgery, but they all do it. And they like it. And the fact that they know that they're helping to raise a lot of money that stays right here in the valley, none of the money that we raise goes out of the valley. They helped build the hospital, for example. Seventy percent of our proceeds go to the hospital, and the other thirty percent goes to United Fund and other local worthy charities, probably thirty other charities. And I think that's basically what motivates them, as it does the members of the board and a lot of the golfers.

PY: (Too far away from microphone and too much static to hear)

ED: Oh yes. We really can't help but being turned on, particularly in November when we give away some rather

large checks and we see the appreciation that the people, the recipients, show when they get a check for, some small charities like, you know, the one that trains dogs for the blind and things like that, they get a few thousand dollars and they're so pleasing. And if you lose your enthusiasm between the tournament and November when we give the money back, why you soon get it back at that time. It's a great deal of satisfaction.

PY: You were talking about Milt Hicks. You said he had a great deal to do with the whole interest in golf and how

ED: Yes, Milt, I guess, was, I'm not sure whether he was born in Palm Springs, but he certainly spent all of his life here. His father had the water company in Palm Springs, and they started the first builders supply company, which is called Palm Springs Builders Supply, so Milt grew up in Palm Springs and he was a very much of a golf enthusiast. In fact, they called him Mr. Golf. And I think he was the guy, he was the first president of the Palm Springs Desert Classic and he was definitely the driving force behind the creation of the tournament. And he had an endless supply of enthusiasm besides being a great fun-loving sort of guy, you know. He enjoyed

life to the hilt. And I think more than anyone else, Milt really pulled the whole thing together. And he was also very instrumental in getting Bob Hope involved in it five years after the tournament started. So we look to Milt, I think, probably if one person should be singled out for what is now the Bob Hope Classic, it would be Milt for starting it. Milt was a member of Thunderbird at the time, and at that time Thunderbird was the first eighteen-hole course in the desert. Prior to that, the only golf course was O'Donnell which was a nine-hole course. Milt belonged to that, and I guess started playing golf there when he was a youngster. Had a terrible golf swing, but he's a good golfer.

PY: I didn't realize O'Donnell had been around that long.

ED: I beg pardon.

PY: I didn't realize the course had been around that long.

ED: O'Donnell? Oh, yes, O'Donnell, as I say, was the first course here. There wasn't a golf course in the valley except for O'Donnell. And then Thunderbird, and then shortly after Thunderbird, Tamarisk. And then El Dorado.

PY:

ED: Well, that nine-hole course was built, and I'm not sure when that was built to be honest with you. But it was

somewhere, I guess, probably in the early or mid-fifties. But Indian Wells and O'Donnell and then Bermuda Dunes, and then after that, they started springing up everywhere. I couldn't begin to tell you how many golf courses there are now. We used to think that there were a lot of courses here when there were like sixteen or seventeen. There must be two or three times that many now. I guess you could play golf all the way from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea without getting out of bounds if you're good enough.

✓PY: Is the golf here different than *Ed's was E, is the weather*
the attraction or is it the different kind of courses? There have been innovations in this area in terms of golf.

ED: Well, I'm not sure it's different course. The weather is a big attraction because they can play golf every day virtually here. Even in the summertime there's quite a bit of golf played early in the morning and late in the afternoon. The, I think possibly that these courses were the first ones to be in really super playable condition year round and look good. The desert courses in Arizona were good courses year round, but they didn't overseed them with rye in the wintertime. So the bermuda would turn down. They were very good to play on, but they didn't

look very pretty. When they started the courses here, everyone overseeded them with rye in the fall, so they were green year round and in excellent playing condition, even in the summer. In fact, in the summer some of the courses are in better playing condition than they are in the winter because bermuda makes them much better turf. But then they were all competitive, so they were all very manicured to the point where they're, the courses here are beautiful, I think. I've seen courses sometimes on the tour, not so much now because I think they're much more careful of them now than they used to be, but a few years ago you'd see some courses and you wonder why they play them. So I think in a sense maybe they started a trend in that direction. Not to say that, you know, a lot of the courses in the east and in the north in the summertime are beautiful. They're manicured. Maybe it's because of the inclement weather, they can't play them year round. So that's not the case here.

PY: Anything else on the project

ED: Well, I don't know, unless you, can you think of any questions you wanted to ask about the tournament?

PY: Generally, the answer more or less answered a lot of them.

ED: Yes, he came with us, he came to work for us, well, about

two years, I guess, after Bob Hope joined the tournament, so that would have been in probably in 1967. And as far as answering any questions about the tournament as it exists today and the mechanics of running a tournament, why he probably answered all your questions.

PY: Any of the tournaments that particularly stand out in your mind?

ED: Any particular one of the Bob Hope Classic Tournaments?

PY: Or any of them.

ED: Well, I think of one in particular that was very spectacular one year when Ike was here after he had retired from the presidency. And he used to come every year and he'd make the presentation. He was a very avid golfer, as you know. And a good golfer. And one year we kind of surprised him, and we had a group, the last group came in and they were tied. And we had a seven-bet playoff, so when we took the two players, I've forgotten who was tied that particular year. I believe it was Arnold Palmer and Ray Floyd, but I'm not sure. But anyway, they went out to the fifteenth tee to start the seven-bet playoff, and we had four bands. We had the Army Band, the Navy Band, the Marine Band and the Air Corps Band all came out onto the eighteenth fairway

and made one huge band and marched down the fairway to where Ike was standing on the eighteenth green. And he actually cried he was so impressed. He really was impressed. That stands out in my mind. Another tournament that stands out in my mind was, and this also involves Ike, we had some behind-the-scenes negotiations going on between the PGA and NBC was televising the tournament and ourselves. And NBC was committed to televise the tournament to its conclusion. And this goes back before the seven-bet playoff years. In the early days they had eighteen-hole playoffs. In fact we had one, before it was the Bob Hope Classic at Indian Wells between Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus, and they wanted a full eighteen holes. But after that, I guess, in order to simplify the tournaments and to help television, they decided to do a certain bet playoff and start on the fifteenth hole. But anyway we were still in the office talking about whether we were going to have a seven-bet playoff or an eighteen-hole playoff. And the negotiations were going on, and Arnold Palmer and, no, Billy Casper and someone else, I've forgotten who, was coming down eighteen and they were tied on the eighteenth tee. And if we go into a sudden, or if we go

into a playoff or we go, the PGA was insisting then that we go back to the first hole. And NBC said, well, we won't televise the tournament. And Chrysler who was sponsoring the tournament said, well, then we won't pay you. And all of this kind of mish mash was going on in the back. And so we finally cancelled the meeting and went out to the eighteenth green. And by then, they chicked up to the green. And this was at Bermuda Dunes. And it's a five-par hole and they're both on the green and regulation, so they're both sitting three. And Billy Casper's got a putt, about a six-foot putt, I guess. And just before Billy gets up to putt the ball, Ike says, "That's a real knee knocker," which was his expression for, you know, when your knees start to shake. And he really didn't realize how much of a knee knocker it was because if Casper didn't make the putt, then we got into a playoff. And I don't know what would have happened between NBC and Chrysler and the PGA and ourselves. But anyway, Casper made the putt and saved the day. And I don't think Casper ever knew how much trouble he saved us by making that putt. There are a lot of other things that, you know, don't come to mind at the moment. If I'd known what you were going to do, I probably could

have searched my memory and come up with a lot of little incidents that were interesting. But I think the thing that probably, well, I can tell you what did the most for us is when Bob Hope joined the tournament because we were making, you know, a reasonable amount of money for charity prior to his joining us. But when he did, why then the lid blew off. You know, we could just about write our own ticket on entry fees and television rights and things like that. And that's when we really got into the big money. And, of course, he's always been very generous, not only with his time, but with his money. One year he donated fifty thousand dollars to the tournament to help with our proceeds and things like that. And that's what really put us into the big time.

PY: I notice one time you gave quite a bit to Desert Hospital.

ED: Well, our policy generally over the years is to donate money to organizations which are not supported by taxes. But this one particular year that you're speaking about Desert Hospital had a extension program going and they were in search of some funds for a specific purpose. And so we gave them a pretty substantial amount, one year with a pledge to do the same thing next year. And there was also a year when all of the proceeds of the Classic Ball went to Desert Hospital. (phone ringing) It was a

hundred thousand dollars, as I recall. That all went to Desert Hospital. And those were special circumstances because normally, as I say, we try to give money to, exclusively to charities that don't have any other source of income other than donations.

PY: I want to ask you something else, but it escapes me.

ED: I thought maybe this was where we have an eighteen and a half minute blank tape, like the Nixon tapes.

PY: Oh.

ED: We don't do that? (laughter)

PY: No, we all fall in. In terms of holding coverage, was it difficult in early years? You were saying that

ED: Yes. Well, of course, golf had just begun to become a major sport as far as television was concerned when we first started. And the first year we were negotiating through one of our guys for, actually it was Desi Arnaz who was trying to sell the television for us, and he felt with very good reason that we had it sold for a fee, I think it was fifty thousand dollars, which prompted us to offer a hundred thousand dollars for prize money. But that deal fell through, and we wound up instead of having national coverage, we wound up with just L. A.

coverage, and I think we got five thousand dollars instead of fifty, which is what, you know, caused us to be into debt, or partially caused us to be into debt the first year. And then in following years we had networks, we had, two years I think we had a network that was put together by some promoters that covered the United States, but it wasn't one of the major networks. It was a series of independent stations, and that type of thing. And we never really got our television coverage locked in. And NBC covered us one year, I think, and ABC covered us one year, on a one-year deal. And then until Bob Hope came with us, and of course, Bob was tied in with NBC so NBC took over the coverage of the tournament. And they covered it ever since, ever since 1965. But the early years, every year we had, you know, we never knew for sure whether we're going to be televised or not and if so, who was going to do it. But we were televised nationally every year except the first year. And the first year was a local television coverage. But television, you know, is a very important part of the tournament. And I think this is another reason why the volunteers enjoy working on the tournament because they know that the folks back home are going to see what Palm

Springs area, Palm Desert and La Quinta and all the cove communities really looks like. And it does get a lot of exposure through TV.

PY:

ED: We have now, we started out with a few local *press* people who came and covered the tournament. By local I mean we get, you know, from L. A. and Riverside and places like that. And now we have a tremendous with all kinds of modern communications set up, typewriters ^{that} ~~they~~ can type here and it comes out on a sheet of paper *in New York* and we have sports reporters who come from New York that cover the tournament and even from England just because of the tournament. So it's come to be and all of this I think adds to the enthusiasm that the volunteers have for working on the tournament. They know that it's not only for a worthy cause, but it's also getting all this national exposure and recognition. And it's nice to be able to go back home to New Jersey or wherever it is and say I worked on the Bob Hope Classic, you know.

PY: That's what's really nice about it now.

ED: Sure.

PY: Were there any problems at all?

ED: No, it wasn't for many years. We just were so lucky with weather until four years ago, I think, maybe five. We got our first rainstorm during the tournament, but even with that we finished our tournament on schedule every year up until two and a half years ago when we lost a day, finished on Monday. And then this year when we lost a day because we were on, and finished on Monday. Other than that, though, we've finished on schedule every year. That's pretty good when you figure twenty years. You know, there's very few tournaments that do that. This year was a bad year for the west coast portion of the tour. And Phoenix finished on Monday and we finished on Monday, and one or two others, I think, finished on Monday. It's just a run of bad luck, I guess. But we only had one bad day. The rest of it was, the weather was beautiful. And that's been the case in any tournament where we had bad weather, we only had bad weather one day. So the weather has been good for us in any season.

PY: Is that ^{what counted} you to move it from February to January?

ED: No. Basically the reason we did that was, in February and the time begins to, it's pretty well filled up. In fact, it starts filling up in about the sixteenth of

January. So things kind of fall into place with the scheduling, PGA scheduling, and television and everything else that the early date, the early January dates opened up. And we thought it would be good for the community to move to those early dates which we did. And I think the hotel people and the restaurant people and everyone else liked it because, you know, it came at a time when they had more accommodations available. And it worked out very well. We do move the tournament from time to time because of the calendar for one thing. Sometimes the first tournament gets too close to the first of the year, you know, when the New Year's Eve Ball's on a Wednesday or something like that instead of the week before. So there's a lot of variables that go into making decisions about dates, and so we do that from year to year. And work with the PGA, and they have a lot of scheduling problems, too, that they have to conform to. So it's a joint effort between the PGA and ourselves as to what dates we use. We also have to be aware of the fact that the date festival in Indio starts, has started a week or so after our tournament. One year we conflicted. Our tournament ended on the first weekend of the date festival, and that was a disaster. And the

time was, either one of the events fills every hotel between Indio and Banning and Beaumont. And when you get both of them together, people couldn't find a place to stay. And they always come down here with their horses for the date festival and they'd have to leave their horses down there and stay in Banning or Beaumont or Riverside or someplace. And it was terrible. So we'd have to stay away from those dates. So we usually like to be anywhere from the first tournament in January into the first weekend in February, somewhere in that span. And those dates worked out well for us.

PY: At what point did

ED: Well, we were like in the very beginning. Our first tournament was, we were co-sponsored by the PGA. We always have been.

PY: Thunderbird as well?

ED: Well, Thunderbird was part of the PGA tour. In the early days they had what they called official money and nonofficial money. And the amount of money earned determined the amount of points that the players would get for various things. And they finally, years ago, decided that the unofficial money spent just as well as the official money, so they did away with that, so it

all counts now. But other than that distinction, we were unofficial for the first few years. Other than that, we've always been a PGA-sponsored tournament. And, incidentally, we've had a very good relationship with the PGA which was a very fine organization to work with. They really are. They're very professional. I'm glad we're not sponsoring the baseball, you know, where they go out on strike any time or whatever.

PY: Well, moving now to the Bermuda Dunes, how did you happened to get to the desert in the first place?

ED: Well, I came out here many years ago. My mother and father separated and she moved out here with me. And after the war, when I came back from the service, I got in the real estate business kind of by accident. I was in the salesman brokerage end of the business.

PY: *In the lower valley*

ED: No, Palm Springs. We lived in Palm Springs. And in 1957 some people came into our office looking for some land for a golf course. And they wanted some land that was not flat . . . pardon me . . . because most of the land west of us, as you know, was pretty flat. And the golf courses that were in the north were officially flat courses. So my then partner and I found this land down here, which

we felt was ideal for them and we submitted it to them and there were three partners, as I recall, involved. And they got into some sort of an internal disagreement and they decided not to go ahead with it, so we bought it. We bought the land. And then that partnership was dissolved and Ray Ryan joined me as a partner and we built what is now Bermuda Dunes. And that's how I got into the golf course business.

PY: And you had been a golfer.

ED: Not really. I played a little golf, but I wasn't much of a golfer, but I enjoyed the game and I enjoyed the atmosphere around golf and the fact that developing around the golf course is, you know, is much more satisfying, I think, than developing downtown property or something like that. Then the people involved in golf are all very interesting people. And so it was sort of a combination of work and pleasure. Bermuda Dunes, as I said before, we opened the course on March 1 of 1959 with eighteen holes. And then three years later we added another nine holes. We were the first twenty-seven hole golf course in the desert. And then in 1965 we sold the club and the course to the members. And now they are contemplating adding still another nine holes, making thirty-six holes. And, of course, we

developed the land around the course into home sites and what have you. Built an airport, have our own fire station. But, you know, it's kind of a residential community. We don't have any commercial property here, but we do have a lot of good residential facilities including our own fire station.

PY: What was the motivation for building an airport?

ED: Well, we felt and it turned out to be true that there were a lot of people who were looking for a place that had an airport facility close by. People had their own airplanes. And if you go over and look at our airport now, here we are sort of in the tail end of the season and we can't find a place to park an airplane hardly over there. There must be a hundred and twenty airplanes parked on the airport right now. And that's, you know, considerably less than what we had during the height of the season. And it worked out very well because a lot of the people who live here have their own airplanes and commute back and forth between here and wherever, as far north as Seattle and Portland, places like that. Matter of fact, Ernie Hahn who's developing the shopping center that you're familiar with, I'm sure, flies in and out of our airport. Fact is he was partners with us in the airport when we first built it. And that was back in

I think 1961 or 1962. And it's become a very busy little place.

PY: Is it county?

ED: Wilma County, yes, we're not in any incorporated city.

PY: I had heard initially that it was very windy out here and that's considered to be other than attractive.

ED: Well, a lot of people said that when we first came down here. Of course, I can remember when Johnny Dawson started Thunderbird. Everybody said you're crazy. It's too windy. In fact, I went out there and looked at some property when he was building Thunderbird and it was on a windy day. And I couldn't even get out of the car. I just closed the door and left. Anywhere on the desert you get a lot of wind. And the wind has never hurt us. We have not had any problems. I think when we built the course here, it was probably the only course that didn't have problems with being inundated with sand, sand storm. I can recall times when we could play golf here and we couldn't play golf in some of the other supposedly less windy areas. But you'll hear that from a lot of people, but we don't get any more wind here really than they get anywhere else. We've never had, for example, an airplane destroyed, flipped over or pushed around on an airport by wind, and they have many times in Palm Springs.

We've had airplanes, light airplanes, sitting on the airport that weren't even tied down. And on the same day two or three airplanes would be torn loose at Palm Springs. So I don't buy that. I've heard that. And I think it was started by maybe some of the people who are in competition with us selling property in the early days, late fifties and early sixties.

PY: Frank Bogert told me in talking about Thunderbird Johnny Dawson *mention it to* that was a new development in the sense that there haven't been the idea of building homes around the course.

ED: Yes. I think that's true. I think Johnny Dawson at Thunderbird was the first one to do that. And then Johnny Dawson, after developing Thunderbird, moved over to El Dorado with Jimmy Heines and did the same thing there. Well, we did the same thing here, obviously. But we did it a little bit differently because we had more land available. We had palm sites on both sides of most of the fairways rather than having the golf course in the middle and have it ring around, you know, by home sites. We separated the fairways and developed home sites on both sides. And we were able to do that because we started here with about sixteen hundred acres

(sounds like there's some more talking but if there is, it's
so faint I can't hear it)

TAPE 1, SIDE 2:

PY: I take it then you had bought this property from one
particular group or individual.

ED: We bought most of it from a man by the name of William
Carter who also had Massive Sand and Rock, the big road
building company. And then we added to it with a few
pieces here and there to, you know, square things off
and what have you. But most of it we bought from him.

PY: Had there been any development out there? When did
you purchase it, by the way?

ED: In 1957, I guess, yes, 1957. No, there wasn't any
development out here then. There was nothing here.
Just a lot of sand. The reason, we did quite an extensive
survey here on conditions, for example, one of the
things that appealed to us the first about this location
is the fact that it was hilly. And we found through
some meteorologists or whatever you call them that the
reason for that was that the wind runs through the pass
and it's strong coming through the pass, and then if it
gets further down this way and it's turbulent up there.

As it gets down this way, it starts to diminish if it's still dust, like water does. And sand that was blown in was subtle here and that's what created the dunes. And that's what enabled us to make a course that, you know, is quite undilating. And, of course, the fact that the land was here and was available, in those days you could buy a lot of land almost anyplace. Now it's pretty hard to put together a section of land or even a quarter section of land. But that and the fact that it's cooler here in the summertime being further away from the mountains and it's warmer in the winter. We get a little more sun. For example, we get about an hour and fifteen minutes more sun here at the height of the winter than you get in Palm Springs. And that's true with anyplace down this end of the valley or in the cove area. The sun goes behind San Jacinto Mountain and if you're in downtown Palm Springs it goes down about two thirty in the afternoon. And the further you get away from the mountain, why the more sun you get. So I think those are the reasons why we wound up down here.

PY: *I'll have to go back and* find out which roads it was Bob Hope being covered over.

ED: Well, I don't know, almost every word in the volume, I guess, has been covered over at one time or another. When they started developing, I remember Washington Street when they were grading over there, Washington Street on, I guess, more than one occasion was covered over with sand because the minute you disturb the sand and then you get a wind, why the sand kicks up and blows and one grain of sand will knock a couple more loose and a couple more. And it's a chain reaction. And we've had roads here that, you know, the sand blown out across the road, but I've seen it having lived here most of my life I've seen it everywhere in the valley. One thing we don't have here for which we would all eternally grateful is any flood problem. We are well protected from anything of that nature. And I think when they were develop . . . first building Palm City as it was called and I don't remember exactly when that was, but it must have been the early sixties, I know they had problems just like everybody else here. Palm Desert Greens over here on Country Club Drive had sand problems. They had it at the Springs, they had it everywhere. When you first start, if you get a wind storm there's just nothing to hold the sand down. County now

has a regulation that you must, when you're grading you must keep it wet, but it's virtually impossible if you're grading a large area to keep all of it wet.

There's a new development going in now, well, there's two of them. One right on the corner of Washington and Country Club where they just moved the *Toaled* in and they're starting to grade and they're frantically trying to keep it all wet and they can't do it. I've been watching and didn't know what they could do. Then there's one just west of that where all those palm trees are.

I don't know whether you've seen that. It's a beautiful development. And they've just graded all of that and that sand is just going to blow when the wind blows. There's nothing you can do to stop it.

PY: Did that cause problems then in terms of the degrader?

ED: Not to any great degree. No, you don't lose that much.

It's just that surface the light stuff that blows and it gets in the air and in the form of dust mostly.

There's always now, not like it was twenty years ago.

There's so much development which ties down the sand, but we don't have sand storms here like they did years ago. What blows around now is the wash where the water's washed away all the dust that holds the sand down.

Coming back from Redlands this morning I looked over towards Windy Corner. I don't know whether you know where that is. And you couldn't see the mountain. The sand was just, well, you probably, you say you went to Riverside today? You probably saw.

PY: Yes.

ED: And that's all coming out of the wash. Some day when everything is developed, which eventually it will be, there won't be any sand blowing. It will all be under lawns and golf courses and houses, and that day, I guess, is going to come sooner than I thought it would twenty years ago.

PY: Do you ever see the sand in

ED: You mean this particular area? Well, I don't know. There's been talk about it. Some of the people over in Palm Desert Country Club and some of the people in Bermuda Dunes have, and La Quinta have talked about it, but . . .

PY: As one area?

ED: Yes. But I don't know. I would think it's probably a long way off. There's too many little cities in the valley already, I think, you know. They're talking now, as you read I guess, as I have, about a combined police

force. Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells.

Which I think makes sense. It's pretty hard to none of those cities big enough to have their own police force really. And the county, the sheriff's office, is put out so thin now they can't adequately take care of the county area, let alone all of the cities. So they're are a lot of pros and cons. I kind of like being in the county the way things go now. We've dealt with the county for many, many years and they have, I think, basically done a very good job. And when you consider that it goes all the way to the Colorado River, there's an awful lot of territory to cover. Police protection everywhere is a problem. And strangely enough as our society becomes more affluent, there seems to be more crime.

PY: How did you feel about the formation of the desert county? Did that influence you at all?

ED: Well, yes, I thought it was a good idea. It never got off the ground really. There was a lot of talk about it. I think our interests here are not necessarily the same as the interests of the western part of the county. And I think that even more so now even than then because of the development down here, I think it would be good if

the county was split. But it's pretty hard to do that. The taxes that are generated by this end of the county, I think, go a long way towards supporting the other end of the county.

PY: I was interested when you opened in March of 1959, how many homes that I've seen here

ED: Well, there weren't too many then because the golf course only became playable probably a month before that. However there were, I would say in March of 1959 there were may ten or twelve houses under construction because we were just getting started really.

PY: Did you live here at the time?

ED: No, I didn't. I lived in Palm Springs. I moved down here the latter part of 1959. I think we built a house, I think we probably moved down here in November, 1959, or somewhere around there, and have lived here ever since.

PY: And what do you foresee in possible expansion

ED: Well, right not there's, I guess, about seven hundred and fifty homes including condominiums here, maybe between seven hundred and fifty and eight hundred and fifty, I guess. I don't know. I'd have to check with the water company. And that could be doubled with the available property in the Bermuda Dunes area itself. And, you know,

the county calls, they've got a tremendous area that they call the Bermuda Dunes area. But it's not what we consider Bermuda. We consider Bermuda Dunes just the community around the golf course.

PY: I take it they take in all the way down to I-10 and
on the other.

ED: They go the other side of I-10. They go down to, I think, 111. It includes Palm Desert Country Club. It goes the other side of Palm Desert Country Club. It's a huge area. And that's only for their identification purposes really. But Bermuda Dunes, for all practical purposes, is just the area around the golf course, the golf course community.

PY: And you're not under anyone's sphere of influence out here.

ED: No. We and Palm Desert Country Club are not in any sphere of influence.

PY: How did you come by the name of Bermuda Dunes?

ED: Well, we wanted to get the name Dunes involved because of the contour of the land and its identification advantages. And I really don't, we kicked around a lot of names and the two seemed to go well together. And we wanted to get away from the names that are so common,

sands and all of the names that they've used in Las Vegas, you know, for all the hotels and desert. We didn't want to use desert. We didn't want to use anything that had been milked to death. So, I don't know, somebody said Bermuda Dunes sounds good. And that's how it came about.

PY: It was just

ED: Yes, well, I think, I'm not sure who was involved at the time. There were probably six or seven who were just getting the thing off the ground kicking it around. And I don't know who actually came up with the name, but somebody did and everybody thought it was good. And so that's what we used.

PY: Moving on, when we were talking about putting an airport in Rancho Mirage-Palm Desert area, a commercial airport and a jet, probably

ED: I don't think anyone ever seriously considered putting a jet airport in the Palm Desert-Rancho Mirage area.

PY: Well, George Brooks ^{FSK} was telling me about when he was supervisor, not supervisor, when he was ~~the~~ ^{the airline supervisor}

ED: Well, he was the supervisor.

PY: Yes. But then when he got his commission, I think, for ^{county} the airports

ED: Yes. Well, there was some talk and some serious talk about putting an airport north of Interstate 10 up toward the foothills because of the traffic getting so heavy in and out of Palm Springs. And that really didn't concern us because he wanted in the airport business, but the airport was only an adjunct to our facilities and it was a convenience factor. Really the airport has outgrown itself right now. And so we weren't concerned about it. And very frankly, I didn't think it would ever take place. But they never talked about putting it in Rancho Mirage or Palm Desert.

PY: I guess maybe he was talking about the extension of it.

ED: Yes, he probably meant when there was. I think there was more in the newspapers about it than there was any real serious consideration given to it.

PY: Do you have any intentions of expanding the airport at all?

ED: There isn't much we can do to expand it. The land is developed around it to the point where we just used up about all the room that we've got. I wish we could. I wish we had the foresight then to put in a bigger airport. But we didn't dream that we would ever need a bigger airport than, we thought we had more airport than we

needed at the time. I really would like to have seen a big jet airport go in somewhere on the north side of the valley where there was at that time a lot of undeveloped land. It would have been more centrally located, you know, for all of the communities involved. But I think it's too late now. I don't think the environmentalists would stand for it. You have to have an environmental impact study to do almost anything here in the valley. And that would, I think, probably rule it out.

PY: *Most of the people living here now want they permanent or have they moved here. do you know*
ED: There's a mix; I think the biggest percentage of people

who live in Bermuda Dunes are winter residents. And a good many of them, it's their second home. You know, they have a home in anywhere from the Los Angeles area out to the Pacific Northwest and as far east as Chicago and New York and, you know, all over the United States. Most of them. There are some permanent residents, but I think they're in the minority. Which is why I don't think there's any great deal of enthusiasm about incorporating because I think, you know, they all have their homes and their worries and their problems somewhere else and they don't want any more.

PY: When you bought the land out here, did you have backers for this project or was it between you and your partner?

ED: No. It was just me and my partner. In those days things were done a little differently than they are nowadays. We did everything ourselves. My partner was involved in an oil company and we got some backing from the oil company, but, which in those days was, you know, a substantial amount. But would be nothing today for a project of this size.

PY: Johnny Dawson talks about it's difficult getting backers *initially for it.*

ED: Oh yes. Yes, I know. He, I can remember when Johnny was offering a life membership in Thunderbird and a lot for, you know, if you come up with x number of dollars.

PY: Five thousand.

ED: Yes. Incredible.

PY: For taxes?

ED: Well, Johnny was ahead of his time really, you know. He's done very well, but he had an idea that people weren't quite ready for. In fact, I guess we are a little bit, too, because they're all doing what we did. But, of course, they're doing it on a much grander scale.

PY: What do you mean?

ED: Well, like the Teamsters Union project, you know. They go in there now and they build everything all at one time, build a wall around it and build all the homes and build the golf course or Ironwood. And we got like back in Ironwood is General Electric. And back in the Springs is Equitable Life Insurance Company. And the Teamsters Union, the Country Club on 111 and Pacific Lighting in there. And go on, this new one over here on Country Club. Those kind of people are coming in now as partners. And when Johnny Dawson started and when we got into it, those kind of people would laugh at you. And they'd say, you're crazy. So that's the big difference. You can go out, you can finance a project like this now with a financial institution, but in those days you couldn't.

PY: Did that provide you with any difficulty?

ED: Well, yes, it did because it meant that we couldn't do everything we wanted to do at one time. We had to do a certain amount and then take the money from that and put it into something else and then take the money from that and put it into something else rather than being able to come in with unlimited funds and do everything at one time. So. Well, El Dorado, for example, they opened the course, and I think it was probably two years

They were before they built their clubhouse. ~~It was~~ working out of an old ranch house that they used for a clubhouse. Johnny could tell you that, a year or two before they built the clubhouse. Thunderbird originally was a guest ranch, and Johnny went out and bought Thunderbird Guest Ranch and then he bought an adjoining hundred and sixty acres, I think it was. Thunderbird Guest Ranch was only on a few acres, like ten or twelve acres, something like that. And he bought, I'm trying to think of the woman's name.

PY: Ruth Warburton?

ED: Ruthie Warburton, yes. He bought Ruth Warburton's ranch. She was a widow. John Warburton, her husband, was an actor, as I recall. And he bought the ranch from Ruth and put the golf course on the ranch and used the Thunderbird Guest Ranch as the clubhouse with some modifications. And it's been remodeled, I guess, four or five times since then. But that's the way these projects were put together in those days as opposed to the way they do them now. I look at these guys with a great deal of envy. In fact, Frank Goodman whose doing this thing over here with Pacific Lighting, and he's been involved in Palm Desert Country Club for many years. I had lunch with him the other day and he was telling me

how nice it is when somebody calls up and says they want a fifty thousand dollar deposit to bring in the electricity or something like that, he just calls the auditor and says write a check for fifty thousand dollars and instead of having to go scratch around and sell a few lots to get the fifty thousand dollars. But it's entirely different now.

PY: *Was it difficult at first finding people to purchase lots out here?*

ED: No, we had instant success when we started selling lots, and that's all we sold, too. We didn't sell houses or condominiums in those days. And we were selling lots at a terrific pace, like we were selling them at one point the rate of about two lots a day, a hundred and twenty lots a month, excuse me, sixty lots a month.

PY: What were they worth?

ED: Oh, anywhere from, on the golf course from, seventy-five hundred dollars on up. And off the golf course, from twenty-five hundred to three thousand dollars. Same lots now on the golf course are sixty thousand dollars. But we were very fortunate in our lots there, which was what prompted us to put in the third nine. We bought some additional property and put in the third nine holes because we sold so many lots around the first eighteen.

And I don't know why, I guess our timing was good and we just hit it right. Although some of the other developments, like La Quinta, they were trying to do the same thing without too much success at the time. And then all of a sudden they caught hold and they started selling. Well, when they went in and built that new clubhouse which is a gorgeous clubhouse, as you know, that really turned La Quinta around. And they've done beautifully ever since. It's a funny business, you know. One development will catch on, while another one is kind of sleepy, and then the situation suddenly reverses itself.

PY: People were buying lots about the golf course and

ED: No, no. We didn't sell lots. Well, we sold very few lots before we opened the golf course, but the golf course was there. The grass was growing and some of the tees and greens. It just wasn't ready to open. And we started building the golf course in February of 1958. And we opened it in March of 1959, just a year later, with a clubhouse. And during the latter part of that year, I think we started selling some lots, so there were some homes under construction when we opened. And I think there were about twelve homes. We sold a

lot of lots, and there was a flurry of construction. And then things slowed down. We still sold lots. There wasn't an awful lot of development. And the development always comes in spurts, like even the last year and a half there have probably been two hundred houses built here. And maybe the year before that, or a year and a half before that, maybe there weren't more than twenty houses built. Of course, in the last year and a half there was a tremendous number of houses and condominiums built all over the valley. But, as I say, things are a lot different in the development business now than they were then.

PY: What is your position at this point in relationship to club?

ED: I'm just a member.

PY: In the development of something, in charge of other homes, other lots?

ED: Well, in the last two years we've just been building condominiums. We still have some land in and around the golf course which we will develop, you know, as conditions warrant. Money is a little bit expensive at the moment, and there seems to be a pretty good inventory of condominiums in the valley. We just finished a hundred and

five condominiums which we call Montego West. And we are virtually sold out. We've got four left out of a hundred and five, so our timing was pretty good. And we have planned to develop another two hundred and fifty, give or take a few, condominiums. And as conditions warrant, we'll do it.

PY: I don't have more questions. Do you have anything you'd like to add?

ED: I can't think of anything. I really can't. I wish I could think of more things about the Classic to tell you, but I think we covered everything, didn't we? We covered the charity aspects, origina, when Bob Hope became involved and what a tremendous change that made in the tournament then.

PY: Did it increase enthusiasm in the volunteers?

ED: Oh, yes. I'll tell you, there were two really key people in the Bob Hope or Palm Springs Desert Classic, and Milt Hicks was the one who generated the enthusiasm in the early days. And then when Bob came aboard, why, you know, that rekindled things to a great extent. But there was really no lack of enthusiasm in the early days, but you can envision the difference and what would happen when you have somebody like Bob Hope join it and

head it up. And he's been a great guy to work with. And, of course, his name alone has added tremendously to it. Our television fee doubled the minute he became involved. And it's increased, you know, ever since. So I think the charity aspect of it would be enough to keep the people that we have involved, but I think their enthusiasm, of course, of being associated with Bob Hope is much greater than it would be otherwise. So in that respect we got two great things going for us.

END OF INTERVIEW